



Oklahoma Education Association

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Moving money to IDEA is a great first step

The Fiscal Year 2008 Labor/Health and Human Services/Education appropriations bill contains nearly 800 earmarks costing more than \$400 million. Sen. Tom Coburn's Amendment 3322 proposes to strike three unnecessary earmarks from the bill and move that \$1,050,000 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Following is OEA President Roy Bishop's response to Sen. Coburn's Amendment:

"We applaud and support Sen. Tom Coburn and his amendment 3322, which would reduce pork in the appropriations budget and move that money to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

"When IDEA was first passed, Congress promised to fund the program at 40 percent. Currently, the federal government provides only about 18 percent of such costs. As a result, states and localities must either raise taxes or cut other critical services to provide mandated special education services.

"Passing on this unfunded mandate has caused real financial hardships on Oklahoma schools. They have had to shortchange important programs and services to students to meet the many demands of IDEA.

"Sen. Coburn's amendment would move \$1.05 million to IDEA. While that won't "fix" the Act for schools, it's a good start. And we're behind Sen. Coburn when he calls for the government to fully fund IDEA."

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